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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 001439

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TEACHERS' PROTEST FAILS TO SHUT DOWN HONDURAN
CAPITOL AS TENSIONS RUN HIGH

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1434

Classified By: Political Counselor Francisco Palmieri;
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) SUMMARY: On June 24, approximately 5,000 striking Honduran teachers temporarily blocked the four main arteries connecting Tegucigalpa with the rest of the country, bringing traffic to a standstill and disrupting commerce. Teachers also blocked traffic in other parts of the country, primarily near San Pedro Sula. The teachers' strike is entering its fourth week and tensions are running high. Honduran police and military units, deployed to all four locations, moved against one group of protesters blocking the southern entrance to the city, launching tear gas to disperse the protesters. Police opened all entrances to the city by mid-day. This action marked the first time the Government of Honduras (GOH) has moved forcefully against protesting teachers blocking highways during the month-long work stoppage. Preliminary reports indicate there were no injuries. End Summary.

2. (U) On June 24, approximately 5,000 striking Honduran teachers blocked the four main arteries connecting Tegucigalpa with the rest of the country, temporarily bringing traffic to a standstill and disrupting commerce. Teachers were also blocking traffic in other parts of the country, including highways connecting Puerto Cortez and La Lima to San Pedro Sula. POLOFFs visited all four locations in Tegucigalpa to meet with protesters and local police/military units. While three of the four demonstrations we witnessed were peaceful, POLOFF was present when police decided to launch tear gas against protesting teachers to open the southern route out of Tegucigalpa. Chaos ensued as protesters fled the scene. Police then opened the road. POLOFF did not witness any violent confrontations between protesters and police/military units and preliminary reports indicate that no injuries occurred. Protest leaders, in communication via cell phone, apparently decided to disband the group blocking the Tegucigalpa-San Pedro highway after learning of police action against their colleagues in the south. The other two groups, (which were also the largest) marched toward the center of the city with the intention of converging on the Casa Presidencial. Police condoned off access to the Casa Presidencial as of 1600. Post understands the teachers will seek to protest tomorrow at the Casa Presidencial during a meeting between union leaders and the GOH, when President Maduro apparently will make another offer to resolve the wage dispute.

3. (U) The teachers' strike, now entering its fourth week, has the GOH concerned (reftel). The teachers' unions have alienated much of Honduran society and little sympathy exists among the populace in support of their demands which are deemed excessive. Although it appears they do not enjoy much popular support, they remain a powerful special interest group. Other groups, primarily doctors/nurses, are following the GOH's response to their demands closely. They could also call a general strike if they perceive the teachers were able to coerce the GOH into meeting their terms.

4. (C) The GOH also remains nervous about the March for Life (Marcha por la Vida) that commenced June 24 (reftel). The March's organizer, Father Andres Tamayo, a Salvadoran Catholic priest who resides in Olancho and heads the Olancho Environmentalist Movement (MAO), estimates that eventually, ten thousand people will participate in the march. The march was organized to draw attention to the GOH's inability to protect Honduras' environment; however, there are indications that participants may also demand President Ricardo Maduro's resignation. As it did on June 24 with the teachers, it appears the GOH may take a more aggressive approach toward further disturbances in Tegucigalpa.

5. (C) Comment: While disruptive, the Embassy believes these protests will not destabilize the government. However, if these movements are able to coalesce, and draw from the overall general discontent with Maduro's administration, the political situation could begin to worsen for the GOH. End Comment.
Palmer